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STATE FOR INR/R/MR, IIP/T, IIP/G/NEA-SA, SA
SA/PAB, SA/INS, SA/RA, SA/PPD, DRL
LONDON FOR POL/GOODRICH; PARIS FOR POL/HANSON
CENTCOM PUBLIC AFFAIRS-MAJ.BALDWIN/SGT. BAKER
USCINCPAC FOR POLAD AMBASSADOR HOLZMAN
SECDEF FOR PA

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: KMDR, KPAO, OIIP, OPRC, PGOV, PREL, PK
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: DESECRATION OF THE HOLY QURAN;
U.S.-PAK RELATIONS; CAMPAIGN AGAINST TERRORISM; INDIA-
PAKISTAN RELATIONS; PAKISTAN POLITICAL SITUATION; PAK-
IRAN RELATIONS; U.S.-UN

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: SHARON E AHMAD
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(June 08, 2005)

MR Highlights: President Musharraf's meeting with Kashmiri leaders leads most papers today. "Musharraf Stands By Kashmiri Self-Will", reads a front-page headline in "The News" (para 11). CENTCOM Deputy Chief LTG Lance Smith's visit to Pakistan gets good coverage in the papers this morning. "CENTCOM Deputy Chief Meets Interior Minister Sherpao" (para 2).

Two major papers yesterday carried a clarification issued by the Embassy refuting disinformation reports of alleged U.S. involvement in printing and distributing a fake Quran. A big U.S. critic, rightwing Urdu daily "Nawa-e-Waqt," and its sister publication English daily "The Nation" today pen editorials on the clarification and reject it. "Nawa-e-Waqt" contends: "Whether 'True Furqan' was published in Israel or not, it is an attempt to alter the Quran. America can't get away with it by saying that the action has nothing to do with the U.S. Government." Meanwhile "The Nation" rejects the clarification saying: "The U.S. government's dissociation from this issue shows that it is only paying lip service to its own ideas of religious tolerance and freedom of expression. Will the West allow with similar impunity the desecration, either of actual copies, or by way of parody, of the Bible?" (paras 20 and 21).

PAS placed a by-liner by Under Secretary Paula Dobriansky on the 2005 Trafficking in Persons report. The by-liner, entitled "Working to Protect the Vulnerable," was carried today in the largest circulation English daily "The News". End Highlights.

-- News Stories/Desecration of the Holy Quran

1. "Pentagon Refuses to Condemn the Holy Quran Desecration Incident," "Din" (06/08)

Quote: Rejecting the demand to close down the notorious U.S. detention center in Guantanamo bay, the Pentagon has refused to condemn the desecration of the Holy Quran that took place there. According to a foreign wire service, Democratic Senator Joseph Biden had demanded that the prison be closed down. Pentagon Spokesman Bryan Whitman said that the U.S. would not close down the prison as it is working for a very important objective. He termed the desecration of Holy Quran an unfortunate

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incident, but declined to condemn it. End quote.

-- U.S.-Pak Relations

2. "CENTCOM Deputy Chief Meets General Tariq And Sherpao" "The Nation" (06/08)

Quote: Deputy Commander U.S. CENTCOM Lieutenant-General Lance L. Smith, currently on an official visit to Pakistan, Tuesday called on Chief of General Staff Army Lieutenant-General Tariq Majid at the General Headquarters. He remained with him for some time and discussed matters of professional interest. Later, Smith called on Chief of Staff Pakistan Navy Vice-Admiral Farooq Rashid at Naval Headquarters and

discussed matters of professional interest. Meanwhile, Smith called on Minister for Interior, Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao in his office and discussed matters of mutual interest and lauded the efforts of Government of Pakistan in re-building Afghanistan. The General also expressed his satisfaction on the ongoing cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan and termed Pakistan as an important ally of USA. The General also briefed the Minister for Interior about their ongoing engagements in Afghanistan and expressed the hope that situation in Afghanistan would be soon conducive for the refugees to return. Sherpao assured the general that Pakistan is committed to the stability of Afghanistan and would do its utmost to the Afghanistan brethren and its re-building efforts. End quote.

3. "Musharraf Did Well By Nabbing Qaeda Suspect" "Daily Times" (06/08)

Quote: Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, Congressional Pakistan Caucus founding co-chair, commended President Musharraf on Tuesday for handing over senior Al-Qaeda terror suspect Abu Faraj Al Libbi to the United States.... In a statement issued in Houston, Texas, the Congresswoman said, "I want to commend President Musharraf for showing his leadership once again. Pakistan has been a steadfast ally of the United States in efforts to dismantle the Al-Qaeda terror network."... End quote.

4. "Packed Program Awaits Kasuri In Washington" "Daily Times" (06/08)

Quote: A packed program awaits Foreign Minister

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Khurshid Mahmood Kasuri on his arrival here on a two-day official visit this week. Mr. Kasuri left Islamabad for Washington on Tuesday. He is due to meet Secretary of State Dr. Condoleezza Rice and National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley. The Pakistani-American Liaison Center is hosting a morning reception for him on Capitol Hill in conjunction with the two founding co-chairs of the Congressional Pakistan Caucus, Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee and Congressman Dan Burton. The Minister will also speak on Pakistan-American relations at the Brookings Institution, one of the leading think tanks in Washington. He is also holding a news conference at the Pakistan Embassy, which will be followed by an address to the Pakistani-American community and other guests.... End quote.

-- Campaign Against Terrorism

5. "FBI Helping Local Agencies In Shrine Blast Probe" "The Nation" (06/08)

Quote: The American FBI is assisting Pakistani law-enforcement agencies to probe the Bari Imam shrine blast that killed 20 people and injured well over hundred, officials here said on Tuesday. The local security agencies are also examining the Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) tests of the suspected suicide bombers, which they received on Tuesday from the laboratories. "The test reports confirmed that the scattered parts of the bodies, including head and legs, were of one person, who

was being suspected for the blast," said the officials. A team of Pakistani law-enforcement agencies, including officials from the FIA and Islamabad police, Tuesday assisted the FBI team in investigation of Bari Imam bomb explosion.... End quote.

6. "U.S. Military Confirms Libbi Flown To U.S." "The News" (06/08)

Quote: Senior Al-Qaeda suspect Abu Faraj Al Libbi, who is accused of masterminding two assassination attempts on President Musharraf and Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, has been flown out of the country to the United States, the U.S. military confirmed on Tuesday.... End quote.

7. "Extradition Of Al-Qaeda Activists To U.S. Not Intended To Seek Benefits: Interior Minister," "Jang" (06/08)

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Quote: Federal Interior Minister Aftab Sherpao has said that the intention of extraditing Al-Qaeda activists to the United States was not to seek benefits but to make the war on terror succeed. End quote.

8. "A Muslim Employee In Philadelphia Fire Department Given Two Choices: Either Shave Off His Beard Or Quit The Job," "Nawa-e-Waqt" (6/8)

Quote: A Muslim employee working in the Fire Department of Philadelphia has been ordered to make a choice between his beard and his job. According to an American television, Curtis D. Wacks (sic) was suspended from his job of a firefighter in Fire Department of Philadelphia for not complying with the order of shaving his beard off. According to the order, the beard hindered in wearing the mask needed to be worn to fight a fire. But Curtis said many people in fire departments perform their duties without having to shave their beards off. Meanwhile, the Philadelphia fire commissioner has said that if Curtis does not want to shave his beard off, he should find himself a job some place else. End quote.

9. "U.S., Afghan Forces Capture 17 Suspected Militants Near Pakistan Border" "The Nation" (06/08)

Quote: U.S.-led coalition and Afghan forces have arrested 17 suspected insurgents and recovered weapons and anti-government propaganda, U.S. military said Tuesday. The arrests were made Monday near the Pakistan border in southeastern Afghanistan, it said in a statement, without specifying the exact location. "The insurgents were in possession of automatic rifles, Taliban-sponsored reading material and letters threatening Afghans not to cooperate with Afghan and coalition forces," it said. End quote.

10. "Two Pakistani Drivers Killed In Attack On Tankers Supplying Oil To U.S. Military," "Jang" (06/08)

Quote: Two Pakistani tank drivers supplying oil to the U.S. Forces in Spin Boldak were killed in an attack on the Kandahar-Chaman highway. 'Al-Muslimeen' organization has accepted responsibility of the incident and has said that that anybody supporting Americans was the enemy of

Afghans. End quote.

-- India-Pakistan Relations

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11. "Musharraf Stands By Kashmiri Self-Will" "The News" (06/08)

Quote: President Musharraf Tuesday said that a permanent settlement of the decades-old Jammu and Kashmir dispute is only possible if it takes into account wishes and aspirations of the Kashmiri people. The president made these remarks at the Aiwan-e-Sadr Tuesday evening while talking to the leaders of All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC), who are visiting Pakistan for the first time. The Kashmiri leaders, including Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, Professor Abdul Ghani Bhat, Maulana Abbas Ansari, Muhammad Abdullah Tari, Bilal Ghani Lone and Fazal-e-Haq Qureshi, have recently arrived in Azad Kashmir via new bus service initiated across the Line of Control. President Musharraf underscored the need that a resolution of the Jammu and Kashmiri dispute has to be acceptable to all the three parties, that is, Pakistan, India and Kashmiris.... End quote.

12. "Advani Resigns As BJP Chief" "Dawn" (06/08)

Quote: Indian opposition leader L.K. Advani resigned as the head of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Tuesday after he was criticized by his former Hindu extremist supporters for describing Quaid-e-Azam as a secular leader of Pakistan. Former prime minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, himself a Hindutva ideologue, urged Mr. Advani to take back his resignation. In fact, Mr. Vajpayee went on to back Mr. Advani's statement in Pakistan and said that Mr. Mohammad Ali Jinnah had played an important role in the freedom struggle. India's ruling Congress party slammed Mr. Advani's remarks that were made after a visit to the Quaid's mausoleum in Karachi. A Congress spokesman said a speech by Mr. Jinnah on August 11, 1947 in which he had spoken of Pakistan's secular ideals was not enough to absolve him of the charge as a divisive leader. Last year, Mr. Advani had read out parts of the Quaid's speech as deputy prime minister during a book released in February when he told his BJP supporters that Mr. Jinnah was a secular leader. There was no reaction from the rightwing Hindu extremists at that time.... End quote.

13. "Pakistan 'Stunned' Over Advani's Resignation" "The Nation" (06/08)

Quote: Pakistan on Tuesday said it was 'stunned' over the resignation of Indian Opposition Leader L.K. Advani

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as BJP Chief after he came under fire by Hindu hardliners for praising Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Commenting on Advani's decision to resign, Information Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmad said he was shocked and surprised over the reaction in India to what was said by Mr. Advani about the founder of Pakistan.... End quote.

14. "Pakistan-India Agree To Accelerate Work On Gas Pipeline From Iran," "Jang" (06/08)

Quote: Pakistan and India have agreed to form a secretary-level joint working group to accelerate the pace of work on the proposed four-billion-dollar Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project. End quote.

15. "No Third Country Should Be Perturbed With Gas Pipeline Project: President Musharraf," "Jang" (06/08)

Quote: President Musharraf has said that no third country needs to worry over the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project since the project is in the interest of all the three countries. While talking with the Indian Petroleum Minister Mani Shankar Yar, he underlined the need for an early agreement on the project. End quote.

16. "Govt. To Set Up Peacekeeping Training Institute: Zahid" "The News" (06/08)

Quote: Pakistan is actively considering to set up Peacekeeping Training Institute in Islamabad to impart required skills to the forces from abroad, said Minister of State for Defense Zahid Hamid here on Tuesday. Pakistan has received requests for training from many countries seeking to benefit from Pakistan's experience in peacekeeping and in providing humanitarian assistance, he said while talking to APP.... End quote.

-- Pakistan Political Situation

17. "An 'On And Off' Dialogue With PPP" "The Nation" (06/08)

Quote: The abrupt abandoning in mid-May of an extensive exercise started in March by some sensitive government agencies was the first evidence of a breakdown in the Government-PPP dialogue, but the dialogue still continues. The exercise was to ascertain the electoral strength of each party and their probable candidates keeping in view the possibility of snap election by the

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end of this year. It was abruptly abandoned on instructions from the relevant quarters.... With the PPP and establishment still struggling to sort out problematic issues and more time probably needed for an agreement, the possibility of mid-term polls by year-end is increasingly remote. But the continuing of the process indicates that at least part of the government camp feels that the President's political supporters are simply not equal to their task. Particularly, a strong lobby in the highest circles has developed very serious doubts about the ability of the Chaudhrys of Gujrat to provide a lead in national politics, and are written off by their denigrators as at best parochial provincial leaders. This makes it seem a marriage of convenience between the establishment and liberal forces led by Ms Bhutto is all but inevitable. In a related development, on the insistence of some important U.S. officials who are indirectly mediating, both Ms Bhutto and the establishment have agreed that there would be a fresh round in the dialogue on the basis of the result of the upcoming local council elections, and then there could be a possible final deal. The Americans as important stakeholders would ensure the local body polls are free and fair, and after observing the performance of the

liberal parties, particularly the PPP versus the Government allies and the MMA, they would press the government to give more political space to liberal forces.

In this connection, it has been learnt that the sensitive government institutions, which played such an active role in both the 2001 local and the 2002 general elections, have not been activated. No election cells have been set up, no tasks have been assigned, and no special studies have been ordered. Only the routine reporting and assessment work is being carried out, indicating that the political forces may well indeed be given a level playing field. End quote.

-- Pak-Iran Relations

18. "Closer Ties Between Pakistan, Iran Urged" "Dawn" (06/08)

Quote: Three former Foreign Ministers have urged the governments of Pakistan and Iran to reconsider their recent policies of estrangement in view of common interests of both the countries. "It was unfortunate that despite factors which dictate close friendship and cooperation between Pakistan and Iran, the past 10 or 12

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years have witnessed estrangement between them", they said in a press release issued by the Islamabad Council of World Affairs (ICWA) here on Tuesday. With former Foreign Minister Agha Shahi its President, the ICWA has members, including Secretary-General of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League, Senator Mushahid Hussain, former Foreign Secretary Tanvir Ahmed Khan, former Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar, and former interior minister Roedad Khan. "Instead of mutual trust and understanding, we see mistrust and suspicions between the two brotherly countries," the ICWA said. Describing the negative trends in the Pak-Iran relationship as "real danger" the ICWA emphasized the need to reverse the same.... End quote.

-- U.S.-UN

19. "ElBaradei Set To Get U.S. Backing For Third Term: Diplomats" "The News" (06/08)

Quote: UN Watchdog Agency Chief Mohamed ElBaradei is to meet U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in Washington on Thursday, diplomats said on Tuesday, amid growing speculation that the United States was ready to end its opposition to his remaining at the helm for a third term. "Dr. ElBaradei has been invited by Dr. Rice. The anticipation everybody has is that the United States has decided to support him" when the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) board meets next week to vote on a new Director General, a European diplomat told AFP under condition of anonymity. A Western diplomat said ElBaradei would meet with Rice on Thursday and "I assume she will tell him that the U.S. government will no longer oppose a third term (as IAEA Chief) for him."... End quote.

Editorials/Opinions

-- Desecration of the Holy Quran

20. "American Authorities Ridiculous Clarification," an editorial note in the second largest Urdu daily "Nawa-e-Waqt" (06/08)

Quote: American Embassy has clarified in a letter to "Nawa-e-Waqt" Chief Editor Majid Nizami that America is not imposing a Quran on Muslims with the name of 'True Furqan.'... Whether 'True Furqan' was published in

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Israel or not, it is an attempt to alter the Quran. America can't get away with it by saying that the action has nothing to do with the U.S. Government. This book's publication in America and supply all over the world are enough to infuriate Muslims. Pakistani people and Muslims of the world want to tell the American people that Muslims are victimized all over the world and their holy book was desecrated by American soldiers in American detention centers and nowhere else.... America should support freedom movements and peoples right to self-determination in Chechnya, Palestine and Kashmir. America should withdraw foreign forces from Iraq and Afghanistan and give the peoples of these countries the right to elect their governments. The peace would come to the world inevitably.... America should not interfere in Muslims religious affairs. The Holy Quran is divine and Muslims faith is to follow its injunctions. So, whatever America is doing with this sacred book through its paid functionaries would fuel the fire of hatred against it the world over. Now it is up to America as to how much hatred it can face. End quote.

21. "Not Good Enough," an editorial in the center-right national English daily, "The Nation" (06/08)

Quote: The U.S. government's explanation, expressed by its Islamabad Embassy in replying to a letter from the Editor-in-Chief about the so-called 'True Furqan,' cannot be described as satisfactory. Regrettably, the U.S. government is trying to rely on the so-called freedom of expression argument to explain its inaction about a blatant attempt to attack the integrity of the Holy Quran, which has already come under much more direct attack in Guantanamo Bay at the hands of U.S. government employees. The U.S. government has admitted that the purpose of the 'Furqan' was to proselytize among Muslims, by attempting to convert them to Christianity. The U.S. government reply tries to muddy the waters by accusing an Egyptian newspaper editor of trying to exploit this issue and fanning anti-American sentiment this way. The U.S. government's dissociation from this issue shows that it is only paying lip service to its own ideas of religious tolerance and freedom of expression. Will the West allow with similar impunity the desecration, either of actual copies, or by way of parody, of the Bible? The U.S. government does not answer this, but tries to wriggle out by debunking such claims as the 'Furqan's' Israeli origins or its being part of a series or not. The U.S. government has only

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itself to blame if the impression remains among Muslims that they are facing a Crusade to annihilate them. End quote.

-- India-Pakistan Relations

22. "U.S. Role In The Resolution Of Kashmir And Palestine Issues," an editorial note in the populist Urdu daily "Khabrain" (06/08)

Quote: Addressing different gatherings in Doha, Qatar, President Musharraf said that he has made the U.S. agree that all issues facing the Islamic world, including Kashmir and Palestine, be resolved.... Getting the U.S. to agree to resolve issues facing the Islamic world is indeed a great achievement for Pakistan.... Now that the U.S. administration has showed its willingness, it must keep an eye on the [Indo-Pak] dialogue process so that neither party is able to disrupt it. End quote.

23. "Advani's Predicament," an editorial in the center-right national English daily, "The Nation" (06/08)

Quote: The pressure that compelled BJP President L.K. Advani to resign from the party leadership for 'erring' in making laudatory remarks about the Quaid-e-Azam and the Subcontinent's partition, and regretting the Babri Mosque's demolition, gives an indication of the antagonistic sentiments that have continued to hold sway in India even after nearly 58 years of independence.... Our leadership that has somehow been mesmerized by its Indian counterpart's sweet words must reflect coolly on this point before singing paeans to its commitment to resolve outstanding disputes with Pakistan, including the core issue of Kashmir. The facts on ground support this view. On none of the contentious issues has New Delhi relented even two years after the peace process began. Baglihar, Kishanganga, now five more projects on the Chenab, Sir Creek and Siachen-all remain stuck in the mire of its intransigence. And to think it would adopt reasonable and just stand on Kashmir would be a great folly. If it is not prepared to settle relatively minor disputes, it would be idle to expect it to show flexibility on the emotional issue of Kashmir. We will continue hearing the mantra of 'I am not mandated to change borders' from its leadership till we show determination to stick to our principled position and sedulously work to realize it. End quote.

24. "Breakthrough On The Pipeline Project," an

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editorial in the centrist national English daily, "The News" (06/08)

Quote: The landmark understanding reached between Pakistan and India to get the trans-state gas pipeline project off the ground is the first tangible realization of the peace process that the two nuclear neighbors initiated two years ago. The project that is expected to be kicked off early next year will enable the supply of natural gas from Iran to India through a pipeline that will cut across Pakistan. This evidences the confidence that the two countries have been able to build as a result of their interactions at the official and popular levels. The growing trust is now being translated into mutual benefits that will ultimately lead to the betterment of the teeming millions who continue to live in abject poverty in the two countries.

While the Iran-Pakistan-India pipeline is politically significant for durable peace in South Asia, it will also pave the way for opening up the energy-deficit eastern states to the energy-surplus western and central Asian states. This inter-regional interdependency for a vital industrial input, at a time when economic growth is picking up, will eventually lead to long-term congeniality, as well as opportunities for creation of new trade partners.... End quote. Crocker

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